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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a pilot project in which interns were clustered in an elementary school in Saskatchewan (Canada) to work in collaboration with the teaching staff toward school goals as well as internship goals. The role of the college supervisor was primarily one of supporter, problem-solver, resource provider, and idea stimulator. The working relationship between teacher and intern moved through three phases focusing on: (1) specific feedback based on technical data collection; (2) exploration of ideas and alternative approaches; and (3) interpretation and reflection. Reflective journal writing focusing on descriptive, analytical, and affective levels of reflection was on-going throughout the internship. Feedback indicated a positive perspective on the experience by both interns and teachers. Some adjustments for the three days of inservices were recommended, positive feelings for peer support and peer coaching ranged from very little to substantial, and suggestions for changes in another school undertaking a similar project were provided. The project concluded that a successful practicum is enhanced if the process is perceived within the framework of the total school program and a paradigm of collaboration and experimentation is established at the outset. (Author/LL)

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ABSTRACT

Interns were clustered in Mayfair Elementary School to work in collaboration with the teaching staff toward school goals as well as internship goals. The role of the college supervisor was primarily one of supporter, problem-solver, resource provider, and idea stimulator, although the role of analyzer, advice-giver, and evaluator was available when warranted. The working relationship between teacher and intern moved through three phases focusing on (1) specific feedback based on technical data collection, (2) exploration of ideas and alternative approaches, and (3) interpretation and reflection. Reflective journal writing focusing on descriptive, analytical, and affective levels of reflection was on-going throughout the internship.

Feedback indicated a positive perspective of the experience by both interns and teachers. Some adjustments for the three days of inservices were recommended, positive feelings for peer support and peer coaching ranged from very little to substantial, and suggestions for changes for another school undertaking a similar project were provided. The project concluded that a successful practicum is enhanced if the process is perceived within the framework of the total school program and a paradigm of collaboration and experimentation is established at the outset.

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REFLECTION AND COLLABORATION IN THE PRACTICUM: THE MAYFAIR PROJECT

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BACKGROUND

Part of the success of the teacher education program at the University of Saskatchewan can be attributed to the sixteen week practicum. Each year, the College of Education examines ways to improve, enhance, and expand the teacher training programs that it offers. One of the ways has been to implement as "internship cluster pilot project" in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Board of Education and the staff at Mayfair Elementary School.

The concept for the pilot project originated from discussions held by members of the Practicum Advisory Committee. This committee is an advisory board to the College of Education for its school-based teacher training programs. Members of this board provide essential in-put into the development of the practicum, and represent the major participants in teacher education — schools, school administrators, school trustees, the teachers' federation, and the University.

In the early stages the project was discussed by university faculty, the school, and the school administration. From these discussions the idea was presented to the Mayfair Staff as an opportunity to provide support for the initiatives generated through their Future Search. Although there was no obligation to accept the project, the staff enthusiastically agreed to pursue the opportunity.

Mayfair School had undertaken an extensive Future Search in which a five-year plan was formulated for the school to better meet the many needs of Mayfair students. When the staff at Mayfair School agreed to participate in the Internship Cluster Project, the project was incorporated into the goals and plans of Mayfair School. What differentiated this project from other internship placements was that a "cluster" of interns were assigned to one school for the internship term. For Mayfair School, this meant eight interns, one assigned to each classroom.

Mayfair School had 205 students from Kindergarten through grade eight. There were nine teachers and ten part-time and support persons on staff. A large proportion of the students body was of aboriginal ancestry. Hearing impaired and other special needs students were taught in the regular classrooms.

GOALS

The Mayfair School Internship Cluster Project was a project in which a team of interns was placed in the school to work in collaboration with the teaching staff toward

school goals.

The shared goals of the school and the College of Education were:

1. To provide additional resources for an increased level of learning and participation by school students.

2. To enhance the collaborative effort of the teaching staff in working toward commonly defined school goals.

3. To provide teachers with an opportunity for inservice and professional growth.

4. To enable interns to learn and explore the initial phase of teaching within a supportive and collegial environment.

5. To provide information to the school board and university which may be shared within the spirit of the advancement of knowledge in teaching and teacher education.

LEADERSHIP

The in-school administration played a vital leadership role in the project. The organization of the school, including the interns, staff and the identification of projects and/or problems for study occurred with the guidance of the school administration.

Teachers were primarily responsible to the students and the school, and relied upon school leadership when appropriate. Cooperating teachers also needed to communicate regularly and honestly with the college supervisor. Teachers were free to contact the school administration, faculty advisor and/or the university whenever the need arose. The normal working relationship among teacher, intern, and college supervisor remained essential for an effective internship program.

The role of the college supervisor was primarily one of supporter, problem-solver, resource provider, and idea stimulator. The college supervisor was available to assume the role of analyzer, advice-giver and evaluator when warranted by an intern's need to improve specific aspects of teaching. This traditional role, however, was subservient to the supportive and reflective role.

The positive working relationship between the cooperating teacher and intern was critical. Each intern felt primary responsibility to one person, and that person was the cooperating teacher. Even though other working relationships occurred within the context of the school team and other focus groups, each teacher was responsible for his/her intern. Not to maintain this pair relationship may have resulted in loss of identification and commitment for some interns.

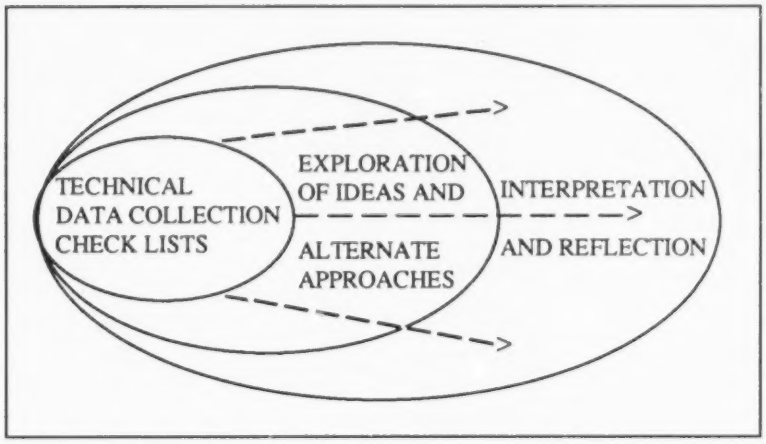
The working relationship between teacher and intern moved through three phases.

1. The intern began teaching. Feedback was positive and limited to a few points at a time to help ensure initial successful teaching experiences by the intern. The teacher drew from his/her experience to suggest ideas for teaching and provided information about the students.

2. Increased analysis of the intern's teaching performance followed. Attention to specific teaching skills and written data collection within the context of the supervision cycle occurred. The teacher provided opportunities for the intern to explore alternate teaching strategies.

3. The intern was encouraged to reflect upon the effectiveness of his/her teaching procedures and classroom practices. The teacher and intern worked as a team, reflecting on their teaching practices and the learning of students. The focus moved from "me observing and assessing you" to "let's assess what we are doing with the students."

These phases are illustrated in the following diagram.



REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING

One of the goals for the Mayfair internship cluster project was to strengthen the concept that professional development in the teaching profession is a continuum. In this perspective, the internship is nearer to the beginning than to the end of a teacher's professional development. The erroneous perspective that internship completes the education of teachers frequently occurs among Education students. They believe that successful completion of internship brings an end to their struggle to become confident,

effective teachers. This view creates the burdensome expectation that within the internship period they must master all the skills and attributes needed by a teacher. Recognizing that "the sky is the limit" for professional development creates both challenge and opportunity for continuing growth as a teacher.

The Mayfair internship cluster project enabled interns to seize this challenge and opportunity. One component was the encouragement to seek and to exploit opportunities to plan and teach as a team with one another and/or with cooperating teachers. The desire and the ability to engage in peer support of colleagues had obvious benefits for continuing professional development. One of the strengths of the cluster project was the closeness of the peer group, which functioned as a support system for the interns placed in the school. The likelihood was enhanced that these interns may become teachers who will seek and provide peer support as a result of their experience in the cluster. Another component was the requirement to write a reflective journal. Development of a reflective approach to teaching supported the concept of a continuum of professional development.

The interns were given the following outline of expectations for journal writing.

> Write a journal entry once per week, reflecting on teaching experiences.
> Initial writing may tend to be basically descriptive in nature. After a few weeks a higher level of reflection, analyzing teaching and including feelings about teaching, is expected.
>
> > At the **Descriptive Level**, describe your experiences in planning, teaching, and evaluating learning outcomes. This may be done for specific lessons or as a summary of the week.
> >
> > At the **Analytical Level**, consider such matters as the effectiveness of your teaching, alternative approaches, the implications of their instructional decisions.
> >
> > At the **Affective Level**, reflect about both your own feelings about teaching and your sensitivity to the feelings experienced by their students.
>
> Initially you may write about "typical" lessons or episodes in your teaching. After two or three weeks, your writing might focus on one or more "critical moments" which occurred during the week.

The journal writings were filed in a binder with lesson and unit plans as well as feedback sheets from their cooperating teachers and college supervisor. The journal entries were read by the college supervisor once a month, during observation visits to the school. Occasionally the college supervisor responded in writing, but more frequently attempted to find time during the post-teaching conferences to explore points or questions

posed in the journal writing. All of the interns indicated that they valued the written response to their journal writing and all would have liked the college supervisor to respond in writing at each visit. The interns also appreciated the inclusion of their reflective writing in post-teaching discussions although three interns indicated that they had discussed informally the same points with their cooperating teacher previously.

At the end of the internship the journals were re-read in order to categorize each weekly entry as descriptive, affective or analytic. The analysis category was sub-divided because of one intern's focus on the implications of his analysis of and feelings about teaching. The purpose of the categorization was to determine if, when, how, and perhaps why, the nature of the interns' reflective writing might change over the course of the internship.

Five of the seven interns were faithful, recording entries each week. The other two did not establish the habit of writing each week; however, these two interns' entries were extensive and honest. One returned to journal writing near the end of the experience with an open and extensive exploration of her feelings. Two continued throughout the internship to write consistently and courageously at the affective level. Another's strength was accurate description.

Two of the regular writers achieved the most impressive growth in effectiveness as teachers; both were personal journal writers and were active members of the peer support group. However, these two were quite different in their internship journal writing. Both included some description as well as analysis, but one began strongly to write on an affective focus whereas the other eventually became more open in sharing her feelings. The fifth regular writer wrote fluently and passionately throughout the internship at the analytic level with implications clearly and consistently identified. From the beginning his focus was strongly on the students, and how the school, the teachers and the education system could better support the development of the students as whole persons. Whether or not they wrote about the students' feelings, all of the interns demonstrated awareness of and concern for their students' feelings during post-teaching discussions.

The development of journal writing was not as natural for some interns as it appeared to be for others. Three interns were more reserved and private. For the others, the internship journal writing was done in addition to their personal journal and/or was simply a written record of more extensive mental reflections done privately and shared orally with cooperating teachers, fellow interns and other support persons. Overall, there was not a significant or consistent change in the focus of the interns' journal writing. Those who began strongly in a descriptive or analytic or affective manner maintained the same focus.

Their written analyses supported the development of their teaching strengths. The two who wrote about their feelings were also effective teachers. For the intern whose writing was limited to a descriptive level, journal writing did not appear to be an important factor in her growth as a teacher.

Although the habit of journal writing may not become firmly established in four

months, it is possible that the habit of mental reflection might be developed to continue beyond the internship. Certainly the interns affirmed that the journal writing could provide a relevant and personal context for discussing the results of classroom observations.

FEEDBACK

After one term feedback on the project was received from teachers and interns. Teachers responded to a series of questions about the sixteen-week term with interns in the school. One item in the questionnaire administered to the school staff and the interns asked them to identify their personal goals and the extent they felt that these goals were achieved during the internship term. The goals identified by teachers and interns are listed below.

PERSONAL GOALS

Teachers:

To better help students:
- more individualized help
- expose students to the variety of interns' talents

To provide interns with a positive teaching experience
To provide interns with solid support
Professional development
Help the university make changes in the internship program

Interns:

To build personal teaching skills
To learn about the daily operations of a school
To provide extra help to students who need it
To visit/work with a variety of classes
Team teaching
To try different teaching methods
To both give and receive support
Develop a collaborative relationship with other staff members
Meet new people with new, innovative ideas and talents
Professionalism and confidence
To manage classroom behavior
To teach music and drama
To learn from my cooperating teacher

To what extent were personal goals achieved? Fourteen of the fifteen respondents indicated that they would recommend this cluster approach over the "traditional" model for internship. One person did not respond to this item in the questionnaire because he/she felt they had no basis of comparison for answering the question. However, he/she noted that "It was fun to have a lot of bodies around."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROJECT

Another question asked staff and interns to identify highlights of the project. These are listed below.

Teachers:

Peer support
An excellent intern
Involvement of staff and interns in the many events in the school
Learning new things from the interns
Seeing my students really bloom with the extra attention
New input into drama, art, dance, and native culture—the added talents of the interns
Having two people in the classroom
Interns planning together
Opportunity to plan jointly and teach a unit of study
The collegiality that was developed

Interns:

Learning from other interns and teachers
Team teaching
Teaching in other classes
Experimenting in different levels
Extra activities available—eg. Heritage Club, Student Council, the assemblies, the combined physical education program.
The support system that existed
Variety of teaching—the students—working with remedial reading and math groups.

THE INTERNSHIP SEMINARS

Interns and teachers were asked to express their views on the effectiveness of three full-day inservice days held at various intervals throughout the internship. Responses by both teachers and interns were positive. The following responses were provided when the staff and interns were asked for recommendations in respect to the seminars.

Teachers:

Adjust the seminars to suit the needs of the teachers and interns as well as the goals and needs of the school.
Less emphasis on data collecting; more emphasis on reflective evaluation with professional targets in mind.
Three half-days should be on planning, under the supervision of the college supervisor. Provide a lot of time for planning during each seminar. More time to

talk and share. Place the emphasis on planning together.
More personal time for teachers and interns to plan.
Perhaps teachers should not be required to attend all seminars. For example, in the first seminar, have only the college supervisor and the interns in the morning. Collaboration between teachers and interns could then occur in the afternoon.

Seminars should be interactive and action-based.
Models for good and varied instructional techniques should be included.
Treat interns as professionals in training.
Less emphasis on the Guide to Intern Growth. It is too cumbersome and formal.
The mid-term evaluation is too long and overly detailed. A one page, 1 to 5 scale using the same categories and emphasizing action plans would be more useful.

Interns:

Generally, we could use more time with our cooperating teacher (This point was repeated numerous times by several interns).
Less review of the manual. Information presented in the second and third seminars was redundant. Less time on lecture.
More time to talk about children as well as more planning time.
More time for the mid-term evaluation.
Omit the information presented to interns at the orientation on campus in August.
Look at the final evaluation during the third seminar.
More group discussions.
Getting to know our teacher in the first seminar was fun and worthwhile.

PEER SUPPORT

A major goal of the project was to provide opportunities for peer support for both teachers and interns. Responses indicated that there were some opportunities for peer support, although there was also room to provide further opportunities. Feelings for peer support among interns ranged from very little to substantial. It was apparent that individualization was a factor.

PEER COACHING

To what extent did opportunities exist for peer coaching? Scores in this category appeared to fall on the "low" end of the 5-point scale (See Figure 1), although some interns and teachers indicated that the opportunities for them were "high". Teachers felt that opportunity for them to participate in peer coaching was low (1.44 on the 5-point scale).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR
PEER COACHING

	Interns' Response		Teachers' Response	
	X	Range	X	Range
For Interns	2.46	1.0 - 4.0	2.33	1.0 - 3.0
For Teachers	2.56	1.0 - 4.25	1.44	1.0 - 2.0
Among Pairs	3.27	1.0 - 5.0	2.57	1.0 - 4.5

Fig. 1

To what extent did opportunities exist for team planning and/or team teaching? Figure 2 indicates that these opportunities were rated on the lower half of the 5-point scale by both interns and teachers. However, the range of scores indicates that for some participants the opportunity for team planning and/or team teaching was high.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR
TEAM PLANNING/TEAM TEACHING

	Interns' Response		Teachers' Response	
	X	Range	X	Range
For Interns	2.46	1.0 - 3.0	3.01	1.25 - 4.40
For Teachers	2.50	1.0 - 4.5	2.78	1.0 - 4.0
Among Pairs	3.97	2.0 - 5.0	3.43	1.0 - 5.0

Fig. 2

REFLECTIVE WRITING

Interns were asked to write reflectively about their experiences each week. The value of this exercise is reported in Figure 3. Teachers appeared to perceive a greater value in this exercise than did the interns. Is the workload a factor in explaining this difference? (It is the interns who have to do the writing). To what extent is experience a factor?

It should be noted that the range in feelings on the value of the reflective writing was greater for the interns (1.5) than for the teachers (4.0-4.25) on the 5-point scale.

PERCEPTIONS BY INTERNS
AND TEACHERS ON THE VALUE OF
REFLECTIVE WRITING

	X	RANGE
Interns	2.8	1.0 - 5.0
Teachers	4.13	4.0 - 4.25

Fig. 3

BENEFIT TO MAYFAIR STUDENTS

To what extent was the internship program beneficial to students in the school? As indicated in Figure 4, both teachers and interns felt that student benefit was high on the a 5-point scale.

PERCEPTION BY INTERNS AND TEACHERS
ON THE BENEFIT TO MAYFAIR STUDENTS

	Interns		Teachers	
	X	Range	X	Range
Instructional Program	4.36	3 - 5	4.45	4 - 5
Social Skills	4.36	4 - 5	3.92	3 - 5
Role Models	4.68	4 - 5	4.51	4 - 5
Co-curricular Activities	4.75	4 - 5	4.78	4 - 5

Fig. 4

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES NEXT TERM

Teachers and interns were asked to suggest changes for the new group of interns who were assigned to the school in the second (after Christmas) term. The responses are summarized below.

Teachers:

Encouragement of a more general professional distance between interns and

students.
Surely we don't need intern/teacher participation for three full days in the seminars.
More flexibility in terms of observations and teaching in other rooms.
Plan a way to share intern expertise in a formal way Eg. developing bulletin boards, activity centers.
Identify interns' special talents and schedules earlier.
Schedule the observation times.
Arrange to have other teachers help teachers when their intern is doing full-time teaching.
Bi-weekly meetings with all the interns. Schedule them into the timetable.
A seminar focused on Mayfair needs.
More intern involvement in small group activities right from the start. Schedule small groups for a short time each day, right from the beginning.

Interns:

Schedule it so interns are observing and teaching in other classes right from the beginning of the school year. (Noted by a majority of the interns).
Two formal lesson per day should not be expected. On some days there is no time or no "formal" lessons to be taught.
Everyone should team up to try new teaching approaches or subjects with which they are not comfortable.
Schedule full-time teaching blocks well in advance.
Schedule team teaching from the beginning.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES FOR A PROJECT ELSEWHERE

Teachers and interns were asked for recommendations they would give to another school which might wish to explore a similar cluster concepts for student teaching or internship. Responses are listed below.

Teachers:

No changes, but the important point is that you make changes to suit that particular school after a trial period.
Be sure all interns are prepared for all that is involved.
Carefully schedule interns for full-time teaching.
Strongly encourage teachers to work in groups even when the intern is full-time teaching.
The university should work closely with the school in the selection of interns.
Have all interns actively involved (at least for a short time each day) in small group work, right from the very beginning.

Interns:

Make use of ALL extra bodies at all times.

Interns should start working with small groups which require extra help right from the start of school.
Teachers could be working with remedial groups when the interns are full-time teaching.
Move interns around to other classrooms before they are too involved in their own grade.
Other teachers could be part of evaluating the intern .
Schedule team teaching and out-of-class observations from the start.
Everyone in the school must be open to the idea.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IN-SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

One question asked for comments/suggestions for in-school leadership. Responses recognized the essential element of strong, open, supportive, and positive leadership within the school.

Teachers and interns responded favorably to this item in the questionnaire. Comments such as "excellent job", "a great leader", "continue the good work", "I'm proud to say I am a part of the project", and "very supportive" were written. Other descriptors such as "encouragement", "highly skilled", "thoughtful guidance", and "understanding" were noted.

One comment noted that the leadership for such a project needs to be very visible within the school. Another comment suggested that more leader-intern meetings could be held, particularly early in the term. A comment noted that a communication problem was somewhat alleviated when the intern bulletin board was introduced.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE SUPERVISOR

This question asked for comments/suggestions for the role of the college supervisor in such a project. It did not ask directly for an assessment of the particular college supervisor assigned to the Mayfair school project. It would be expected , therefore, that comments would be made in the "suggestive" form rather than in a form which rated the college supervisor. The question was designed to assess the ROLE of a college supervisor, not the performance of an individual supervisor.

Teachers and interns responded positively to this item in the questionnaire or, in some cases, left the item blank. The point that the college supervisor was present in the school often enough so she became perceived as a staff member rather than as a "supervisor" was appreciated. Comments such as "continue to be positive and supportive", "very encouraging", "very efficient", "skilled observer", and "observed by a pro" were made. As a result, some interns asked that even more observations be made by the college supervisor.

Several interns suggested that observations be more informal in nature — on the spur of the moment and in a casual manner to see a "real context" and "not in a fake structured lesson because school is not that planned and structured all the time". This would help relieve tension for interns and would "give the supervisor a chance to observe what really goes on in the school". Observation both in and out of the classroom were suggested.

There was some suggestion to further adjust the role of the college supervisor. The college supervisor should be less traditional in the approach to the internship, and developing a complete flexibility should be a goal which will take time. This view may be best described by the following written comment on the questionnaire:

> The college supervisor has worked hard towards being a facilitator among professionals. Guidance, openness, and support rather than direction are what teacher/intern pairs need as long as the teacher is cognizant of the objectives of the internship and its place in the baccalaureate program.

CONCLUSION

The school staff has backed up its written assessment of the project with action. Another large group of interns was accepted in the second term of the school year, and Mayfair has agreed to host a similar group of interns during the fall term of the 1992-93 year. Mayfair has recognized the positive value of the additional resource of interns in the school which can stimulate creative staff energy to create a better learning environment for both teachers and students. This has enabled teacher education to occur within a positive and collaborative "live" environment, resulting in new dimensions of professional growth for experienced teachers as well as for those just beginning to enter the teaching profession.

The positive experience at Mayfair school implies that the practicum in teacher education ought to target schools and staffs rather than the traditional approach of focusing on classrooms and individual teachers. This does not suggest that cooperating teachers should not remain the key to a successful practicum program. Indeed, they are the principle element in a program. However, this key element is enhanced if it is perceived and supported within the larger framework of the total school and a paradigm of collaboration and experimentation. The Mayfair project has combined the three key elements in a new paradigm for teacher education—total school involvement, collaboration, and a sense of experimentation. Skilful leadership of these key elements can result in a positive inservice for experienced teachers, an enlightened practicum for beginning teachers, and increased learning by students in the school.